June 22, 1974

Dear Harold,

Thanks for your call of the 16th. Yesterday I received a letter dated June 14 from the Archives, along with a copy of the 1/27 transcript. I have read it only once, very hastily, and haven't had a chance to think about the substance.

I am enclosing a page of notes, including a very quick index and the text of the Archives letter to me; also, an annotated copy of the relevant pages of Ford's book. He is quite an editor! I was amazed to see how he cut out the good parts about JEH and RFK, and such things as the references to Sweatt - right out of the middle of a paragraph!

I haven't yet received the material you said you had written but not yet mailed. So, it is hard for me to respond to your ideas about what to do with this material, since your comments on the phone were so elliptical. There is little doubt in my mind that the Archives would be delighted if sending this to others had the effect of screwing you. Whether that was a major purpose, I don't know. I can see a major reason for release being the probability of a loss in Appeals Court. As for other sinister reasons - to discredit Hoover, or Ford, or the classification system, I can only speculate from here. Whatever the need for you to make a quick response, I hope you can take enough time with the annotations and introductory material. This is important enough material to deserve a considered response. Please let me know what comes of your idea for publication.

By letter dated June 18, the Archives notified Lifton that this transcript was available. (He had previously asked that it be declassified, as I recall, on the grounds that Ford used part of it.) They did not send him a copy. He called me when he got the letter, and offered to share the cost of a copy with me. He did not know that it had been released in conjunction with a suit by you, of course. I will tell him about the status of your suit, in summary form, so that he will know that there is funny business going on, and that both you and I feel that this transcript was released for some devious purposes. If you do not publish the transcript, please let me know specifically what you think should not be done with it. Since David is quite eager to get this transcript, and was even before he knew anything about your suit, I would like to be able to explain why it would not be good for him to take immediate action to publish or write about it. I will restrain myself, and I think he will listen to your case if I present it. I know you don't like to have anything to do with Lifton, and I don't think he is the person the Archives sent this to in order to mess you up, but I think he should be told some of the background.

By the way, I assume that David Wise would be entitled to a copy of this - that is, the Archives probably sent him one already. Perhaps Fred Newcomb also.

I will write the Archives, asking if any of the other transcripts, and the reporter's notes for the 1/22 session, have been reviewed.

Not having gone back to look at the other executive session transcripts, my impression is that this gives the strongest impression that the members knew what was happening - the JEH problem, etc. I noticed only one possible undeleted expletive - "sheet" on p. 177. You said there were more?

You questioned the list of 552 witnesses in the WR. According to my notes, there are 555 names, of which 3 are aliases, leaving 552 actual witnesses. So I don't think there are any missing or uncounted witnesses.

What a joke to classify this stuff Top Secret! But if it had been released with the first batch, Wise's article would have had some sensational quotes,. It is wrong, that's for sure.

Best, Paul
PLH

PS: on an unrelated topic, I am enclosing a complete set of instructions for our "Archives Project." It is a lot simpler than it looks, and I still think it would be worth Jim or you making sure it gets done.